

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) The A process for producing an absorbent composite ~~by~~ comprising contacting a solid supporting material with a mixture comprising at least one polymeric material and at least one crosslinker and curing the mixture on the supporting material, wherein the polymeric material ~~is~~ comprises a carboxyl-rich polymers polymer, not less than 50 mol% of the ~~polymers~~ polymer being polymerized from unsaturated carboxylic acid monomers, the monomers of the carboxyl-rich ~~polymers~~ polymer are being wholly or partly neutralized with ~~bases~~ a base before or during the polymerization, and the mixture is an emulsion.

2. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to~~ of claim 1 wherein the supporting material ~~is~~
comprises fibers and/or, tapes, or a mixture thereof.

3. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to~~ of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~ wherein the supporting material ~~is~~ comprises wovens ~~and/or,~~ nonwovens, or a mixture thereof.

4. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 2 wherein the fibers are filaments, ~~and/or~~ staple fibers, or a mixture thereof.

5. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims 1 to 4~~ claim 2 wherein the fibers
are synthetic fibers.

6. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims~~ claim 1 to 5 wherein the emulsion
comprises an organic solvent ~~comprising a mineral oil~~.

7. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims~~ claim 1 to 6 wherein the polymeric
material ~~is~~ comprises a carboxylic-rich ~~polymers~~ poly-
mer based on ~~copolymers~~ a copolymer of vinylically
~~and/or~~ or allylically unsaturated carboxylic acids
~~and/or,~~ or both, or their derivatives, or mixtures
thereof.

8. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims~~ claim 1 to 7 wherein the polymeric
material ~~is polymers~~ comprises a polymer based on ~~co-~~
~~polymers~~ a copolymer of acrylic acid, ~~and/or on esters~~
~~and/or amides~~ an ester or an amide of acrylic acid,
~~and/or of methacrylic acid,~~ and mixtures thereof.

9. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims 1 to~~ claim 8 wherein the polymeric
material further comprises a granular superabsorbent
polymer based on partially neutralized crosslinked
polyacrylic acid.

10. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any~~ of ~~claims~~ claim 1 to 9 utilizing a covalent
crosslinking ~~agents~~ agent.

11. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to~~ of claim 10 wherein the covalent crosslinking
agent ~~is~~ comprises a diepoxide.

12. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any of claims~~ claim 1 to 11 wherein said the
curing is effected in ~~the~~ a range from 100 to 200°C.

13. (Currently amended) The process ~~accord-~~
~~ing to any of claims~~ claim 1 to 12 wherein the support-
ing material is coated, impregnated, padded, foamed, or
sprayed with at least one polymeric material and subse-
quently cured.

14. (Currently amended) An absorbent com-
posite ~~obtainable by any~~ prepared by the process of
~~claims~~ claim 1 to 13 wherein the polymeric material ~~was~~
is prepared by an emulsion polymerization.

15. (Currently amended) A close-out com-
prising at least one absorbent composite ~~according to~~
~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 to 13 as well as and at least
one sealing membrane ~~composed of plasties~~ comprising a
plastic.

16. (Currently amended) The close-out
~~according to~~ of claim 15 wherein the absorbent com-
posite is disposed between two sealing membranes ~~com-~~
~~posed of plasties~~ comprising a plastic.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (New) A sealing material for a cable sheath comprising an absorbent composite of claim 14.

20. (New) The sealing material of claim 19 to enhance water retention in agriculture and horticulture, to regulate humidity in rooms and containers, and for moisture regulation in sitting or lying furniture.

21. (New) The process of claim 6 wherein the organic solvent comprises a mineral oil.